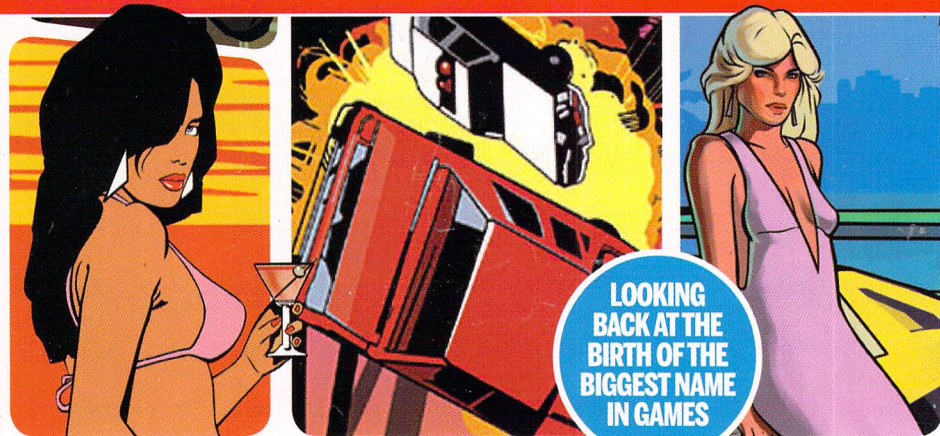


TOTAL
PC Gaming presents



THE RISE OF A PHENOMENON



the history of grand theft auto



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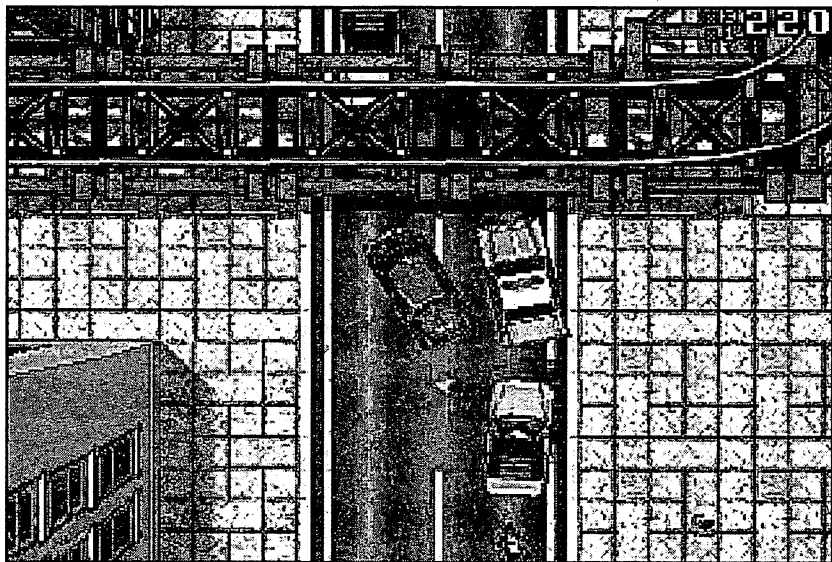
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the history of Grand Theft Auto

From humble beginnings, Grand Theft Auto would segue from controversial videogame to notorious media brand. Stuart Hunt braves Liberty City and speaks to the people responsible for one of videogaming's most popular franchises

the history of grand theft auto



We currently find ourselves on the cusp of a brand new appendage to the *Grand Theft Auto* series – a release that will find fans returning to a very special place. Liberty City is a virtual homage to the bustling streets of New York, and is unarguably the most infamous metropolis of any videogame to date. It's become as iconic to the series as the freedom, the carjacking and the infectious wrongdoing. For many, it marks the very first time they ever came to experience an 'open world' environment in a videogame.

The person responsible for designing and building Liberty City was Peter Farley. Ironically, his background wasn't in programming or videogames – although he admits to being brought up on a staple diet of ZX81 and Spectrum – but in architecture. Working for a small architecture firm after finishing the first year of his degree, Peter came to realise that a career in construction really wasn't for him, and decided to answer a job advertisement posted by DMA, who at that time was looking to expand and hire a new team of level designers.

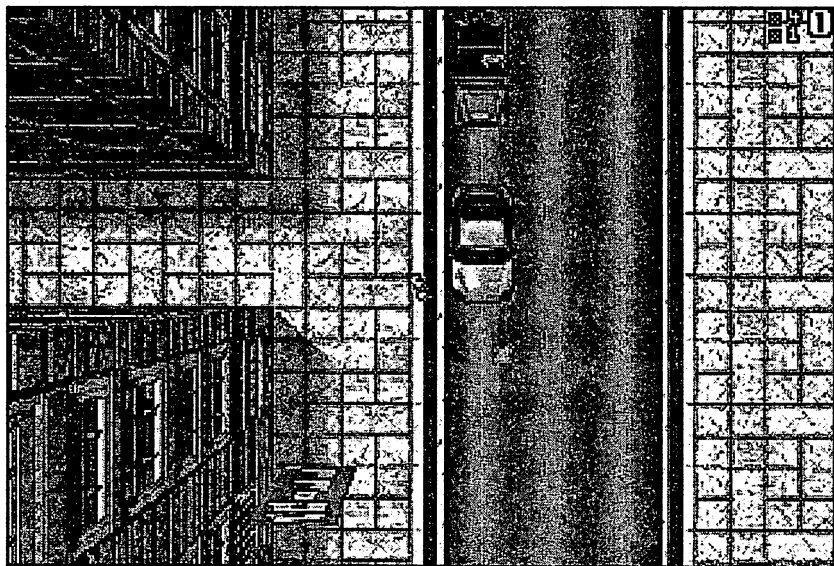
"I had no real idea what a level designer was, but I'd always loved videogames. The interview process was spread over two days, and I remember thinking that at the time it was one of the most challenging things I'd ever been faced with," admits Peter. "On the second day, I was sat down in front of a puzzle game that they had in development, and was tasked to build a fully working puzzle in 30 minutes. I was left alone to sweat it out. I don't think the puzzle even worked, but

they must have seen something, because I got the job."

At the time that Peter joined DMA, the company would be divided while it worked on two very different projects: *Body Harvest*, a planned launch title for the Nintendo 64, and another, slightly less highbrow game for the PC. *Body Harvest* was DMA's flagship project, and Peter vividly remembers the interest that the game generated among the new recruits.

"There were four level designers that started at the same time as me. I remember being shown around on that first day. We were going to be split up, based on the needs of two new projects that had just been started, and we all wanted to work on *Body Harvest*. It was just so damn sexy, all those 3D graphics, the N64 development kits and Silicon Graphics workstations sat around – it was like mission control at NASA," explains Peter. "Anyway, as it worked out, neither of us got to work on the *Body Harvest* project. Our skills would be put to use on a rather drab-looking top-down racer, which at that point had the working title 'Race 'N' Chase'."

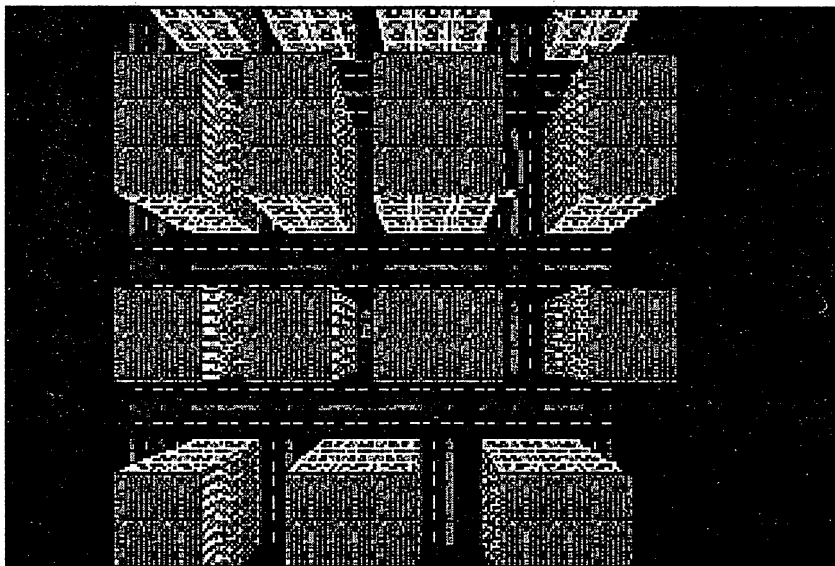
But 'Race 'N' Chase' is where the genesis of *Grand Theft Auto* can be found. Mike Dailly, who at the time was lead programmer at DMA, had been working on a code that would produce isometric cityscapes. Viewed from an aerial camera that the player could intuitively manipulate, this engine would become the first

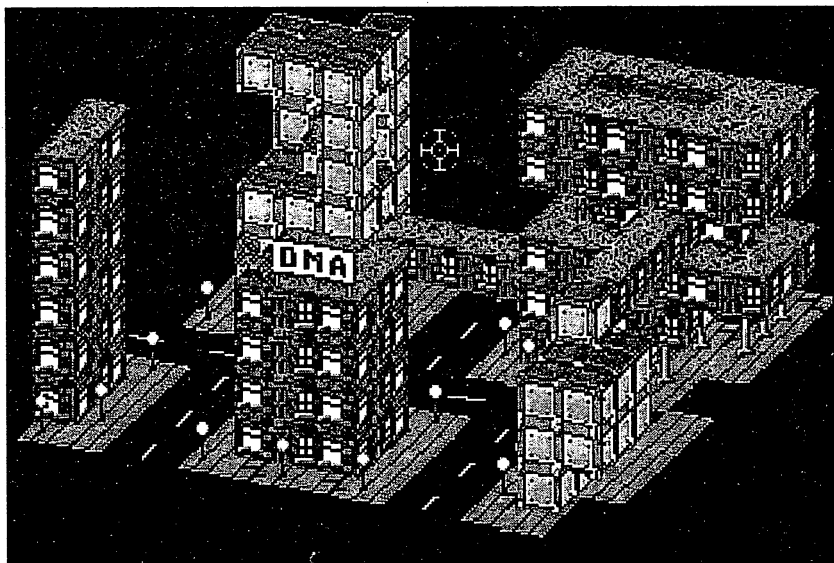


the history of grand theft auto

Grand Theft Auto prototype. However, fate would intervene when Bullfrog released *Syndicate Wars*. After spotting its glum, Orwellian, *Blade Runner*-style skyscrapers, Mike knew that his engine looked just too similar and decided to rework it. Oddly, it was after seeing the Sega Saturn game *Clockwork Knight* that Mike considered switching the engine to a side-on perspective, but after a conversation with a colleague, he decided to set his sights a little higher.

"I was speaking to John Whyte (who at the time was working on *Body Harvest* for the N64), and he'd been trying to get an overhead racing game past Dave Jones [DMA's founder] for a while. Dave, however, wasn't interested," explains Mike. "It then occurred to me that although I had a side-on engine, all I needed to do was add a floor and it would easily become an overhead engine. I set about using the previous *GTA* prototype as a base. Using cubes, I built an array of perspective points, then with a simple 3D array, attached faces to each active cube. I removed interior faces (since they couldn't be seen) and rendered the resulting city. Looking at it, they decided to restart *Race 'N' Chase* using the new engine, because it would allow far more freedom and a true perspective. *GTA* was a real team effort and had input from every team member, this was how it all started. It shows how important true R&D is, without it, several DMA games would





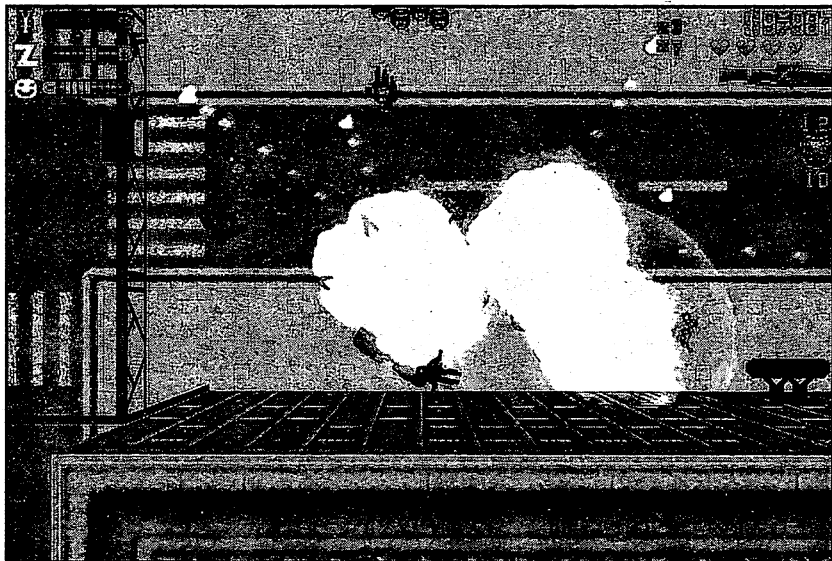
have never been started."

The parallax movement of the buildings, and the way in which the camera would lock on to your car and pull away the faster it travelled led to the possibility of creating an overhead police chase/action game. And so Mike's overhead city engine was used as the backdrop.

When Peter was assigned to the Race 'N' Chase project he was keen to utilise his knowledge of architecture, and set about plotting each map on a piece of paper. This was how all of the cities inside *Grand Theft Auto* would begin – as 2D maps of roads, sidewalks and buildings – and once complete, using a map-editing tool, they would be translated into the vibrant and detailed 3D cities that we can see in the game. It's a well-known fact that the three game maps – Liberty City, Vice City and San Andreas – were based on the cities of New York, Miami and San Francisco respectively. They also contained subtle nods to well-known areas of each city. For example, Liberty City's sections included Park (Central Park), New Guernsey (New Jersey) and Brooklyn (Brooklyn).

The first hurdle that the team had to overcome was getting to grips with the mapping tools. None of the team had any experience of using map editors, and while the tool chain at DMA was very well instigated, it would take a lot of time for the new team to learn all the different techniques that were available. Also, the

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team would find that they had no way of viewing the city in three dimensions until they ran it in the actual game.

"Personally, it was a pretty smooth transition to go from designing individual buildings to then designing a whole city. The design criterion is different. For the game, you were designing form and function to support gameplay, rather than in real life where you design a building to support an activity or movement. But the actual process was remarkably similar," explains Peter.

Given the theme and subject of *Grand Theft Auto*, you'd expect the team to be governed by a strict list of rules, and the missions to be pencilled in before development began to help ensure its safe passage through the censors. But Peter confesses that working on *GTA* was quite a liberating experience.

"The working brief was non-existent, other than some guidance from the head of art," recalls Peter. "Most of us had no experience at all and were making it up as we went along. I think that spirit of adventure and freedom is conveyed in the final game, and it went a long way to helping to define many of the design decisions. In terms of the look and feel of the city, the level designers worked closely with the artists to create locations and a style for each of the cities. Once a set of tiles had been completed it was then the level designer's job to use them like Lego blocks to create the city. I think the art team was always quite amazed, yet sometimes



horrified, at the manner in which we creatively used their tiles to create new textures and forms."

Grand Theft Auto is a brilliant juxtaposition of a dour and depressing world, but painted with vibrancy and colour. It certainly feels the most chipper of the series, as it holds this brilliant sense of irreverence and fun throughout its missions. The way your character would comically hop over the bonnets of cars and pepper those poor Hare Krishnas all over the road was just so strangely enjoyable. The realism and popular culture references of the later games have all but drowned out those jubilant audience cheers and squeaky voices that pumped from those blue phone boxes.

"When we started the game, it used 8-bit graphics and the palette was much darker and more realistic than the final release. At this stage, PC technology was moving at a really fast rate, and with the game taking a while to finish anyway, the decision was made to switch to 32-bit graphics, giving us a much wider palette. I think the whole art department spent the next two weeks redrawing the game tiles and sprites. The result was a much brighter and more colourful game, which, in the long run, helped reduce some of the impact of the adult nature of the game," explains Peter.

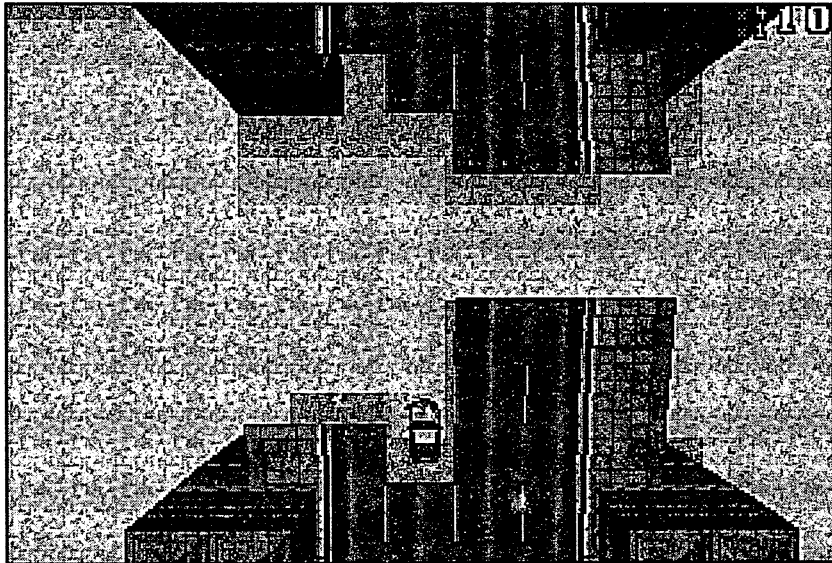
Liberty City took four to five months to design and build, and the mission design

the history of grand theft auto

and scripting would take a further six. Over the course of its development the core team would change, other departments would be drafted in to assist, and, at one point, DMA's entire art department were put to work on the game.

The original Race 'N' Chase design was the one that DMA pitched to BMG, but it wasn't until after the publisher was on board that the name would later be changed to *Grand Theft Auto*. As the game presented the player with so much choice, checking for bugs and glitches proved to be very difficult, and the game's development would stretch from 15 to 30 months. Its 'open world' environment lacked constraints, allowing for plenty of different routes and ways to complete its missions. And each needed to be played through to its completion, because, as was the nature of the engine, every new element that was added could potentially affect another.

"It's kind of hard to overrun when you don't have a schedule, but we were aware that *GTA*, like all the other projects DMA had then, was taking too long. I think the publisher was more concerned than us though," Peter says. "Most team members worked extra hours because we were all so excited by what we were creating. There was this energy and feeling about the place that what we were working on was really special. At DMA, there was this mentality that a game



wasn't finished until they were happy with it. Very few developers are ever in that position, so it was refreshing, and ultimately led to some great, innovative games. Although it also led to some turkeys that should have been canned after six months, but weren't."

Grand Theft Auto debuted on the PC in 1997. Initially developed in DOS, it would later be ported to Windows, PlayStation and it even found an admittedly poor, but technically impressive, Game Boy Color conversion. There were also rumoured to be Nintendo 64 and Saturn conversions of the PlayStation port in the works, but sadly they never found a release.

What really helped to set *Grand Theft Auto* apart from other games of the time was its sense of freedom (hence the name Liberty City). Fun could be found by deviating from the missions and exploring the game's colourful environments.

The game was well received by many in the gaming press, garnering rave reviews, and even a Gold Award in *PC Format*. However, the tabloids, most notably the *Daily Mail*, would criticise *Grand Theft Auto* for its violent themes, which many people felt it was trying to glamorise.

"I think one of the reasons *GTA* was so well-received was the amount of detail – it showed the love and attention that had been heaped on the game by the people making it," says Peter. "Team members would always come up with new ideas like the tank or the rocket launcher, and they would just get added into the mix. No one ever said no, or that something couldn't be done! Looking back, there are a few things that could have been better. The road layout was trying to map New York too closely, and without diagonal road tiles, the area around the park didn't end up as much fun to drive around. Also, some of the missions were left over from the very start of the development process, and perhaps weren't as well thought out as some of the later ones. But I guess for virtually everyone on the team it was a learning process and, despite all our mistakes, people loved the game, warts and all."

After the release of *GTA*, BMG was bought by Gremlin Interactive. It was under Gremlin that DMA released two expansion packs for the PC. *GTA: London 1969* and *London 1961* were *Life On Mars*-style mission packs that set the series on the streets of London in the swinging Sixties. These expansion packs would help DMA gauge the demand for a full *GTA* sequel, and help to keep the franchise fresh in the minds of gamers.

Colin MacDonald was the producer and project manager for *Grand Theft Auto 2*, and joined the company shortly after the acquisition by Gremlin. Colin first got into games by purchasing a SAM Coupé home computer. Its relatively small install-base meant that there was very little software available for the machine, and what would begin as a hobby for Colin – writing software for the machine – soon grew into a small development and publishing company. This would lead him to handling some big licences, including *Lemmings*, and it would be this

the history of grand theft auto

Lemmings link that would eventually lead Colin to join DMA as a producer and take on the reins of *GTA 2*.

"We had a very good idea of what everybody had fun doing in the original, so we didn't mess with that. And, in essence, every *GTA* game ever since has taken the same approach," says Colin. "But we added a lot of game functionality to try to enhance the *GTA* experience. We also gambled with moving away from the contemporary setting of the first game, and ever since, opinion has been split on the particular pros and cons of that decision."

For the sequel, it was decided that the setting would move 'X' years into the future, and the missions, rather than bleating from the hearing end of a telephone or the buzzing of a pager, would come from the mouths of warring gangs that populated the game's three cities. You had the pristinely attired Yakuza, the twitchy Loonies, the Russian Mafia and the Rednecks, among others, and each was given a detailed backstory that fleshed out their world brilliantly. This idea of basing *GTA* around the criminal activities of contesting gangs has since become a mainstay in the franchise, although from *GTA III* onwards, it's been used to help fuel the game's narrative rather than its individual missions.

It was agreed that the underlying engine for *GTA 2* would remain similar to the DMA one – which Colin admits had gone through a few changes – but the engine was completely rewritten to make the cars look more solid and realistic against their shiny, futuristic setting. They would first be drawn and mapped in 3D before being transformed into the 2D forms that we saw in the game.

"Because we could see from the first game what worked and what didn't, we were in the fortunate position of being able to plan fairly effectively, so there weren't many drastic changes that occurred throughout the development. The *GTA 2* pills scattered around the cities for collection is the only major feature that I can think of that wasn't planned from the very start," recalls Colin.

Grand Theft Auto 2 was released in 1999, and would debut on both the PC and PlayStation. It was later ported to the Dreamcast, and also received a shamefully laggy Game Boy Color port a year later. Shortly after the release of *GTA 2*, Gremlin was bought by Infogrames, and shortly after, Dave Jones decided to leave the company to join Rage Software. DMA was later sold to Take-Two where it was renamed Rockstar North; a move that would change the face of the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise forever.

Grand Theft Auto III was released in October 2001 and debuted on the PlayStation 2. Rockstar's decision to set the game back in Liberty City was a smart move, as it would send out a clear message that its intention was to pull the game apart and rebuild it from scratch. The biting satire, glum urban setting and tangible sense of freedom would tilt the videogame industry on its axis. If you strip it down, *Grand Theft Auto III* can really be seen as a brilliant hybrid of two earlier DMA games: *Body Harvest* and the original *Grand Theft Auto*. It's likely that when



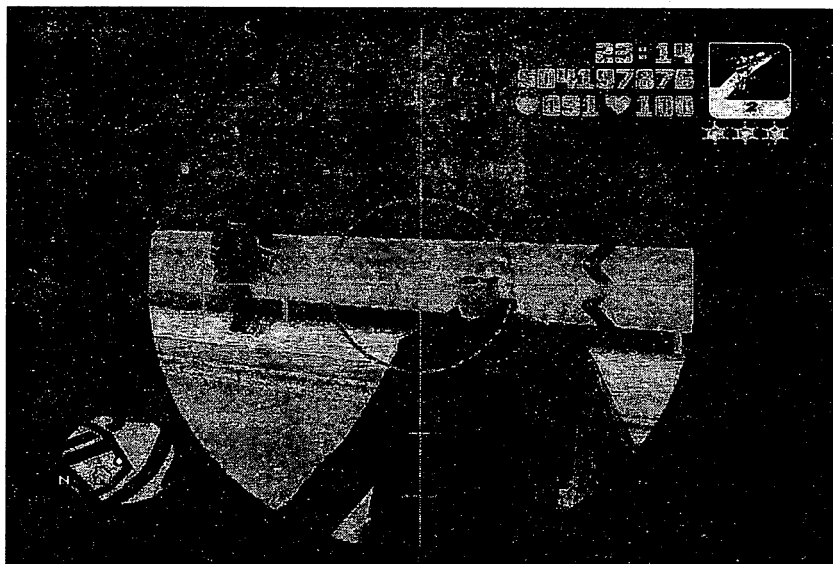
it was bought by Take-Two, the DMA team would have been a collective troupe that had experience of working on both of these titles – a team that had expertise in 3D sandbox gaming and a vast knowledge and experience of the *Grand Theft Auto* licence.

Grand Theft Auto III was praised for the technical ground that it broke. Realistic weather effects and full night-and-day cycles helped lay down the foundation of what we now consider the 3D open-world template, or 'GTA-clone', as it's candidly known as now. The game became a global phenomenon almost overnight, and has retained its prestige ever since.

The series' weird adoration for the Game Boy would end in 2004 with *Grand Theft Auto Advance*. This Game Boy Advance exclusive, developed by Digital Eclipse, was originally promoted as a top-down port of the *GTA III* that appeared on the PS2. But, probably owing to a large technical chasm, the idea was dropped, and instead the game was set one year prior to the events of that game. This would mark the first – and only – time that a *GTA* game was not developed by an affiliation of DMA.

For the highly anticipated sequel, *Vice City* – which many consider to be the pinnacle of the franchise – Rockstar would continue its geographical trend, and

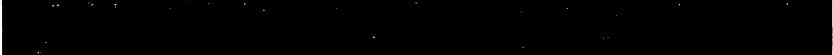
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return to the second of the first three maps, but would add a brilliant twist: the Eighties. Setting *Vice City* in the Eighties allowed Rockstar to inject lampoon into the game, and base its characters and missions on classic iconic Eighties cinema. Elements from classic gangster epics, such as *Carlito's Way*, *Goodfellas* and, more predominately, *Scarface*, for its rags-to-riches story, were wholesaled over. And through its loud wardrobes, angular cars and radio stations that blasted out emotive rock ballads, *Vice City* would brilliantly recapture the humour and irreverence of that first game. If *GTA III* laid down the template that future games in the series would look to adopt, then, like all good cinema sequels, *Vice City* would lavish itself in its own success, a feeling that seemed to suit its affluent and ornate setting perfectly. And through its property buying elements, you could really begin to feel like you were stretching your power and notoriety, while leaving your mark across the whole of Miami.

By the time *San Andreas* was due for release, the hype and hysteria surrounding the series was unlike anything seen before. Feeling the pressure, Rockstar would need to create something bigger and grander in scale than what had come before, and it would succeed in many ways with *San Andreas*.

With a main story that would take the best part of 70 hours to finish, a lifetime of secrets to uncover, three huge metropolises to work through and no



interconnecting loading times thanks to its seamless streaming, no one could argue that the game wasn't a technical marvel. But many felt, by Rockstar adding levelling up and appearing to concentrate on subterfuge elements of the game, that *San Andreas* lacked one vital ingredient: structure.

In typical *Grand Theft Auto* fashion, the franchise's transition to a new platform, in this case the PSP, with the *Stories* series, would prove to be another sterling effort by Rockstar. And also, in typical *GTA* fashion, it would kick things off by returning to Liberty City. *Liberty City Stories* (which was later ported to the PS2) was set three years before the original *GTA III*, with a new protagonist, a new set of varied missions to work through, and even allowing you to take to the skies in a helicopter. It proved to be an almost-flawless translation to the handheld. Although *Liberty City Stories* wasn't the first *GTA* game to see Rockstar incorporate multiplayer elements (*San Andreas* has a few co-op missions), it was the first in the series to incorporate an online multiplayer mode, courtesy of the PSP's Wi-Fi capabilities. Rockstar followed up the successful *Liberty City Stories* with *Vice City Stories*. It followed the same theme, but had the notable addition of allowing your character to swim and also included a refined targeting system.

So, history's taught us that a return to the oily streets of Liberty City seems to mark an inaugural shift in the franchise, affecting a trilogy of games that seem to span over one generation of hardware. *GTA IV* has moved further away from those humble DMA days. Realism now governs the game, with the gameplay – and the aesthetics – getting the customary burnished respray. The series has also been given its most degenerate protagonist to date: Niko Bellic – a human trafficker and remorseless killer who hails from Eastern Europe. Finally, there's the city itself, which has less emphasis on scale, and more on the denizens of Liberty City and the way in which they interact with one another and the player. For all of the cinematic storylines, controversial themes and bravado that drips from each new addition to the *GTA* franchise – despite being places which in reality we'd probably rather not visit – it's really the cities themselves that are pivotal to the appeal of any *GTA* game.

They are virtual playgrounds without constraints that allow us to run amok without any fear of consequence. This is likely the reason why many people break free from the main game, deviate from the missions and seem content to find and shape their own Liberty City stories.

grand theft auto

A-Z

- A** is for *APB* – The classic top-down cops and robbers racer by Tengen shares a few similarities to the original *GTA*.
- B** is for *Body Harvest* – DMA's classic N64 game was doing the open-ended, free-roaming, vehicle-borrowing genre long before *GTA III* arrived on the scene.
- C** is for Cops – What would *GTA* be without the cops? Nothing, that's what. It would be like *Pac-Man* without Blinky, Inky and Clyde!
- D** is for Dodo – Like the highly elusive bird, the biplane in *GTA III* is hard to come by.
- E** is for ESRB – The Entertainment Software Rating Board regulates the content of all videogames, and recently put a ban on the release of *Manhunt 2*.
- F** is for Fido – Is the pet name given to the tight-lipped protagonist in *GTA III*. He's also referred to as Kid
- G** is for Gouranga – Kill a whole group of Hare Krishnas in *GTA* and 'Gouranga' pops up on screen. It means 'golden-limbed'.
- H** is for Head Radio – The infamous radio station that first made its appearance in *GTA*.
- I** is for Ice Cream Truck – The vanilla vehicle in *GTA III* played a controversial part in a mission involving blowing up pedestrians.
- J** is for Joyride – Essentially what you do when you tire of *Grand Theft Auto's* missions and go for a drive.
- K** is for Kill Frenzy – This controversial section of *GTA* allowed you to amass cash for killing sprees.
- L** is for Liberty Tree – The fictional online and in-game newspaper that chronicles the history of Liberty City.

M is for Menace – *Menace* was the name of Dave Jones' first game – a side-scrolling shooter that was inspired by his love for *R-Type* and *Nemesis*.

N is for Niko – Hailing from Eastern Europe, Niko Bellic is the name of the protagonist in *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

O is for Offensive – Despite winning rave reviews in numerous gaming mags, the *GTA* series has been continuously dogged by claims, mainly from the *Daily Mail*, that it's offensive and encourages violence.

P is for Popping Heads – Although not a function found in the manual of *GTA III*, using the 'Nasty Limbs' cheat, PS2 owners could blow the heads off pedestrians.

Q is for Quality Control – Owing to the freedom in the game, *GTA* proved difficult to test for bugs.

R is for Race 'N' Chase – This was the original name of *GTA* before it was pitched and bought by BMG.

S is for Spank – It's a shame this whimsical drug doesn't really exist. Dealing in spank would kill a drug lord's credibility quicker than a Primark suit.

T is for Tank – Ruffle enough feathers and the Army roll in with their tanks.

U is for Uzi – The drive-by weapon was first introduced in *GTA III*.

V is for Vice City – The Miami-themed second city of *GTA* is widely regarded as the best in the series so far.

W is for Weather Effects – *GTA III* wasn't the first, but it did have day/night cycles and various weather effects.

X is for X-Rated Action – A controversial feature in *Grand Theft Auto III* allowed you to pick up ladies of the night and raise your energy level up to 125%.

Y is for Yakuza – Of the many contesting gangs that populate the streets of *GTA*, the Yakuza are the most 'impeccably dressed'.

Z is for Zaibatsu Corp – The fictional pharmaceutical company that run things in *GTA 2*. It means conglomerate in Japan.



attack of the grand theft auto ctones

It's one of the fattest cash cows in videogame history. We take a look at some of the most promising tugs on its milkie...

SAINTS ROW

Released: 2006

Systems: Xbox 360

THQ's version of *GTA: San Andreas* is not without its charms. Straight off the bat you're given the chance to create your own character to control in the game. It also includes some rather innovative features. You could fraudulently claim insurance by throwing yourself in front of oncoming traffic, and also satisfyingly launch hapless drivers into your front windscreen by forcing them to play a game of motorway chicken.

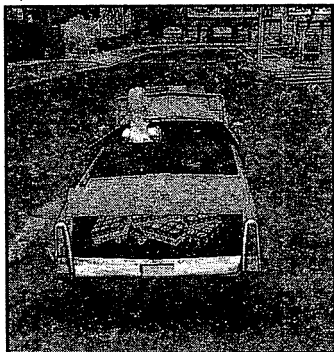


THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN

Released: 2003

Systems: Xbox, PS2, GC, PC

Proving that omitting the word Bart from any *Simpsons* game will immediately guarantee it safe passage through a hall of suck, this follow-up to *The Simpsons: Road Rage* allowed you to cause chaos on the animated streets of Springfield. Leaving aside Konami's awesome arcade game, this is one of the best titles that the mustard faces have put their faces, too. So it should come as no surprise that it's also one of the better *Grand Theft Auto* clones out there.



TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

Released: 2003

Systems: PS2, Xbox, PC, Mac

Taking the award for the most humdrum title ever, you'd have thought that the first *GTA* clone that allowed you to play a martial arts cop would exist somewhere in the realms of high-octane. It wasn't a bad effort – the game faithfully rendered 240 square miles of LA, had a branching storyline and a good cop/bad cop element that gained you points according to your actions – but it suffered the *GTA* hype bug, and we soon clambered back into a cab heading for Liberty City.

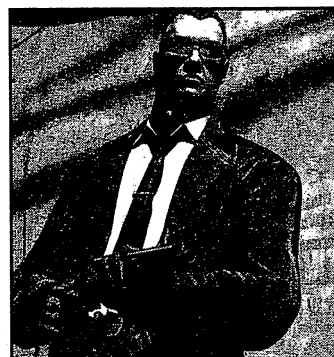


DRIV3R

Released: 2004

Systems: Xbox, PS2, GBA, PC

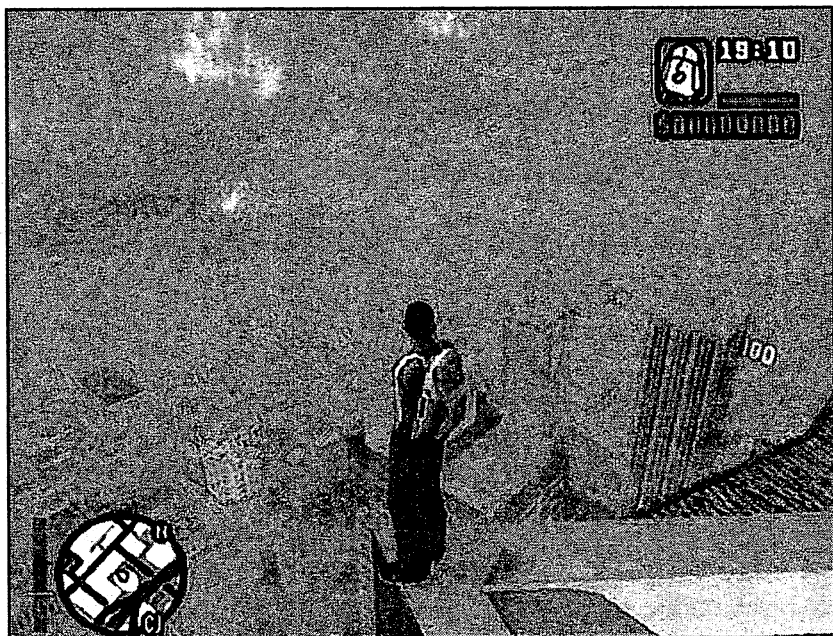
You have to feel for Tanner. His first appearance on the PSone caused quite a stir and his second was a competent follow-up that allowed him to explore the streets of Rio. Then, for his third mission, he turned into a goon with the ability to walk through concrete walls and re-emerge on rooftops unscathed. Reflections' promising franchise was seriously marred by this glitch-laden game, that was further spoiled by pad-tossing enemy AI. Easily the worst *GTA* clone there is.



in a Realtime World

After leaving DMA in 1999, and working on the PC shooter *Mobile Forces* for Rage Software, Dave Jones enlisted the help of his old DMA comrades, Mike Dailly and Colin MacDonald to launch Realtime Worlds. Its first game, released exclusively for the Xbox 360, was *Crackdown*. It took a slightly different slant to the crime-infected cities of *GTA* by allowing players to play a genetically modified law man. Your job was to cleanse the streets of ammo-toting punks by clambering up a well-fortified criminal hierarchy and bringing down the main players. Incorporating a solid driving physic – where you could control your vehicle in midair – and superhuman levelling up that allowed you to free run and scale buildings like the Incredible Hulk. *Crackdown* muddled the sandbox genre brilliantly.





harvesting the seed

Grand Theft Auto III might have popularised the 3D free-roaming genre, but DMA damn near invented it. After a tumultuous delay and stop/start development, as a result of Nintendo wanting to rejig the game to make it appeal more towards the Japanese market, *Body Harvest* eventually found a very late N64 release after it was picked up by Midway. While it did receive some positive reviews, *Body Harvest* was criticised for its vulgar looks and untidy gameplay, which some gamers found a little too confusing. However, you can't deny the scope of the game. Playing as a cybernetic soldier, it was your mission to tackle a race of time-travelling alien insects that were harvesting human bodies from Earth. With its third-person perspective, unique ability to roam its four vast worlds in stolen cars, tanks, boats and planes, and even the moral dilemma of whether to save or mow down civilians in the game, *Body Harvest* can be considered the precursor to Rockstar's 3D vision of the carjacking classic.

the cars of the original liberty city

COUNTHASH

A speed demon that looks and purrs like a Lamborghini Countach.



PENETRATOR

Old-school motor that looks a lot like it's been lifted straight off the set of *The Untouchables*.



AMBULANCE

Mow down an innocent bystander and it won't be long before one of these turn up.



ITALI

A nippy Italian sports car with an open top. Be careful where you park.



BEAST GTS

A muscle car that's both strong and fast – the perfect instrument for ploughing through roadblocks.



MUNDANO

A mundane little motor. A family car,



economic on fuel.

4X4

A surprisingly agile vehicle that's reasonably strong as well.



BIKE

The Bike may be skittish, but it's perfect for escaping the cops.



SUPERBIKE

Super-fast and super-vulnerable – not the safest vehicle in the game.



TV VAN

Strong, sturdy and perfect for crashing a gunfight.



BUG

In here to make up the numbers – also comes in the ugliest of colours.



TAXI

Sadly, it wasn't until *GTA III* that taxi missions were first introduced.



IMPALER

Gangster-mobile, complete with leather seats, fluffy dice and, er... four wheels.



JUGULAR

A play on the Jaguar, despite looking suspiciously like James Bond's Aston Martin DB5.



PICKUP

A strong vehicle, ideal for picking stuff up.



COSSIE

A speedy little motor, that looks very similar to Ford's RS Cosworth.



BULLDOG

The first car you come across in GTA proves to be a good all-rounder.



SQUAD CAR

Don't try to enter one of these if there's a cop sat inside, otherwise it's off to the slammer you go.



REPAIR VAN

The Repair Van, as you might well expect, is a pretty solid vehicle.



STINGER

Very fast, and looks remarkably similar to the Hoff's Pontiac Trans Am. Responds well and glues to the road.



PORTSMOUTH

The only car to be named after a city, and it's a little sluggish to be fair.



REGAL

Basically, a skinny Portsmouth, but again, one of the less-appealing cars in the game.



COACH

Steal a coach and the police get mad – it does host a brilliant *Speed*-parody mission, though.



LIMOUSINE

Parking can be a nightmare, and it's hardly the most inconspicuous of getaway vehicles.



TANKER

Unsurprisingly, the worst vehicle to drive into a gunfight, but great for creating a mini-disaster.

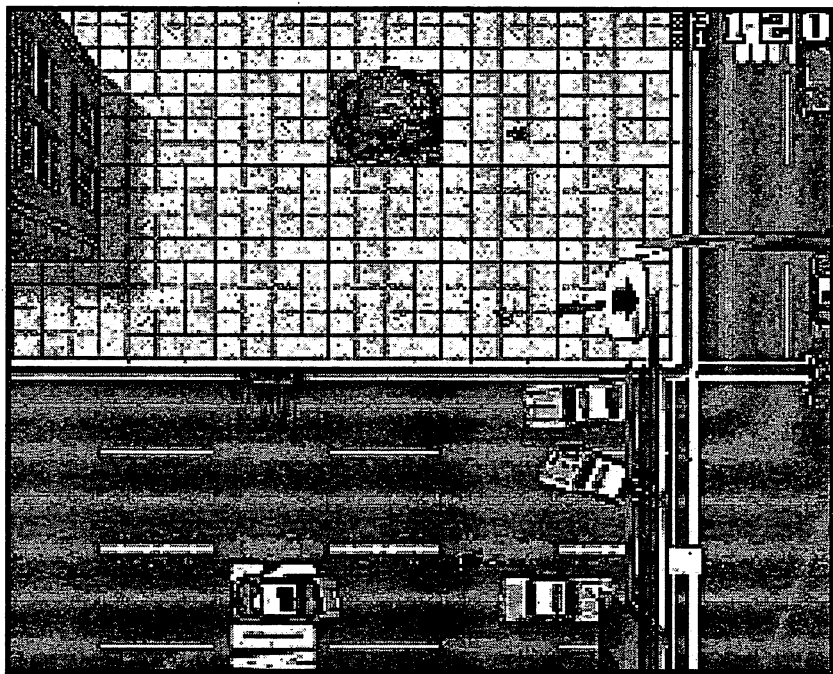


BUS

The school bus – probably the most controversial addition to the vehicle roster.



the whistle-stop tour of gta

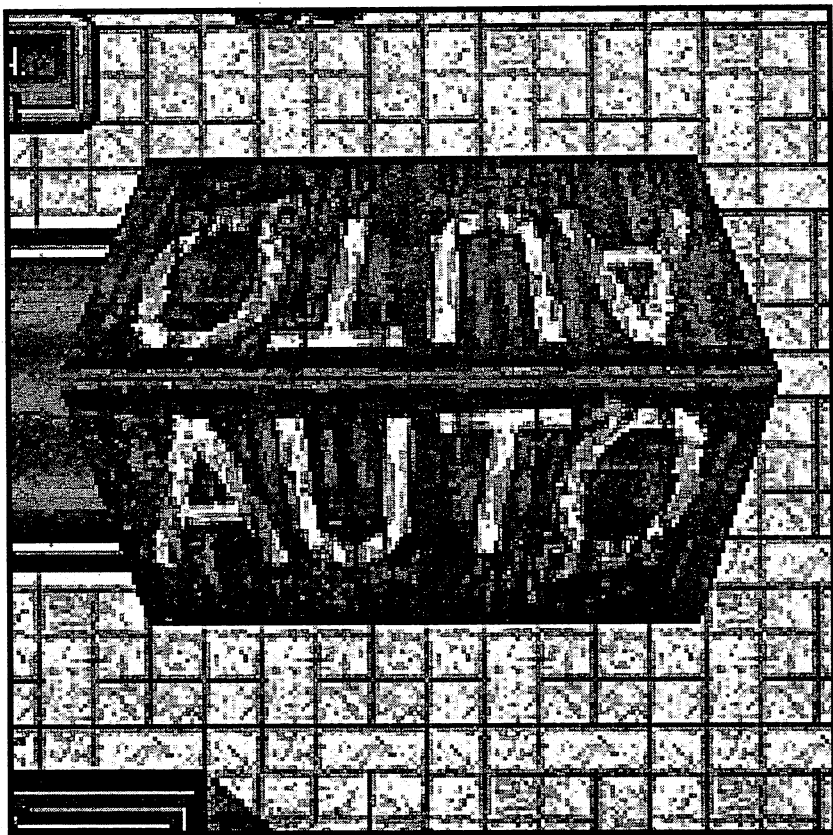


grand theft auto

With over 6,000 kilometres of road, a unique zooming overhead camera and an open-ended mission structure, *GTA* allowed us to play out our own classic car chases through the streets of America. There were dozens of varied vehicles to commandeer, tons of humour and plenty of different types of missions to work through. There was also the chance to compete in head-to-head four-player network games.

grand theft auto 2

A well-hackneyed, futuristic setting would prove the backdrop this time out. Set in the future, your character wakes from a cryogenic slumber greeted by a world ruled by a powerful conglomerate and torn apart by gang warfare. This would play an integral part in the *GTA 2* mechanic, as you'd have to affiliate yourself with each gang, run missions for them and balance out your loyalty to work your way up through its ranks.



the history of grand theft auto

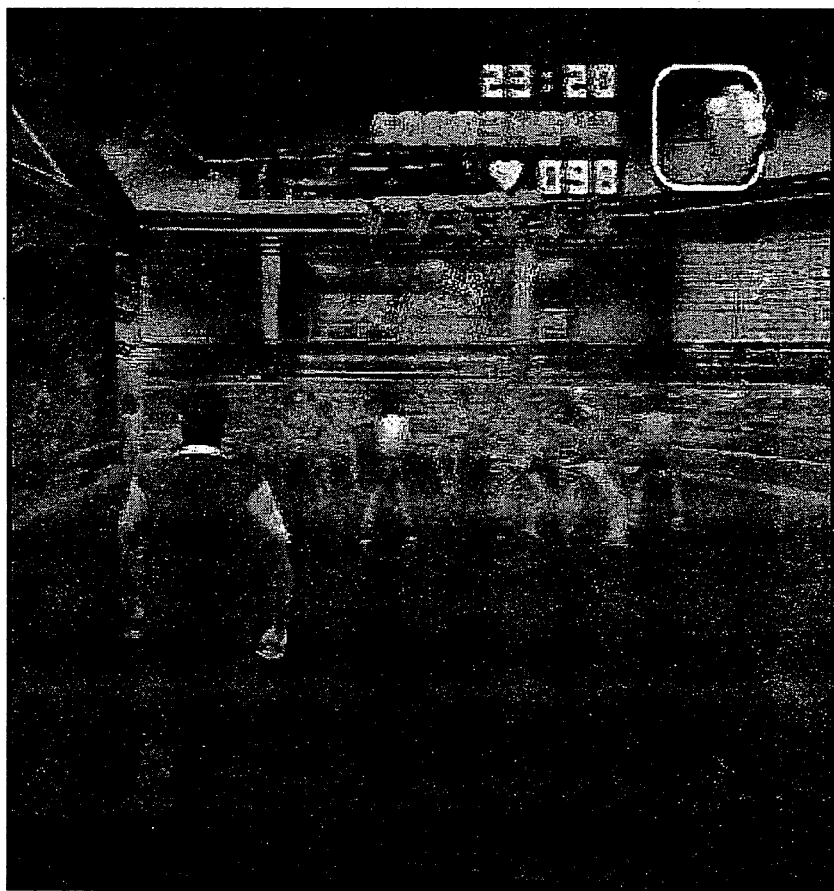


grand theft auto iii

Rockstar's perennial sandbox classic would light a fire in the series. Not since *Mario 64* had a switch from 2D to 3D proved to be such a brilliant move. 3D did two things: fleshed the game out and made the violence more unflinching. Shifting the perspective to street level enabled gamers to experience an iconic sin city peppered with interaction and nods to popular cinema and iconography.

grand theft auto: vice city

A Miami clone was the setting, the Eighties the epoch. Ray Liotta lent his name to its protagonist, and the story borrowed heavily from *Scarface*. It brought swimming and speedboats to *GTA*, and also offered the chance to use money earned in the game to purchase property. The soundtrack too, with its Eighties pop ballads, is one of the greatest videogame soundtracks of all time.



grand theft auto: san andreas

Epic, huge, gargantuan, three words to describe *San Andreas*. Mini-games, going to the gym, dating – if there was one thing you wanted to do in a game it's likely that *San Andreas* included it. It offered escapism, but the number of functions proved too intimidating for some. Put off by the size, and with many of the missions feeling familiar, this last iteration splits opinion among fans.

